

By Russell Ruffin

This guide is part of our 2 day News Media Relations Training Classes presented in 40 cities around the US every year. Classes are conducted by Emmy Award Winning Broadcaster and News Veteran Russell Ruffin.

Ruffin has spent a career as an on-camera reporter for NBC and Fox News. For more than 10 years Ruffin has conducted this class for Law Enforcement professionals involved in crisis news management. He has kept his training current by going to the scene of some of the nation's major breaking news events such as the San Bernardino terrorist attack, the Ferguson, Missouri protests, the Columbine high school shootings as well as the rioting and unrest in Baltimore.

This class goes on-location to law enforcement training facilities and police agencies. During the on-location training, everyone goes before our live TV cameras for mock news conferences and interviews. Some of the breaking news scenarios include everything from day to day events to terrorist attacks and school shootings.

If you would like to see video examples of some of our training, along with testimonials from those who have attended, please click below:
[News Media Relations Training](#)

Preparing Your News Release

(Your Organization Name)

Street Address

City, State, Zip

Phone

Website and email

PRESS RELEASE

For Immediate Release:

Contact Info

Jason McMichaels

Public Information Officer

Phone: 303-477-9989

Cell Phone: 303-556-7878

(Press Release Headline)

(Sub-Headline)

(City, State, Date) -- (First sentence must include the most significant info)

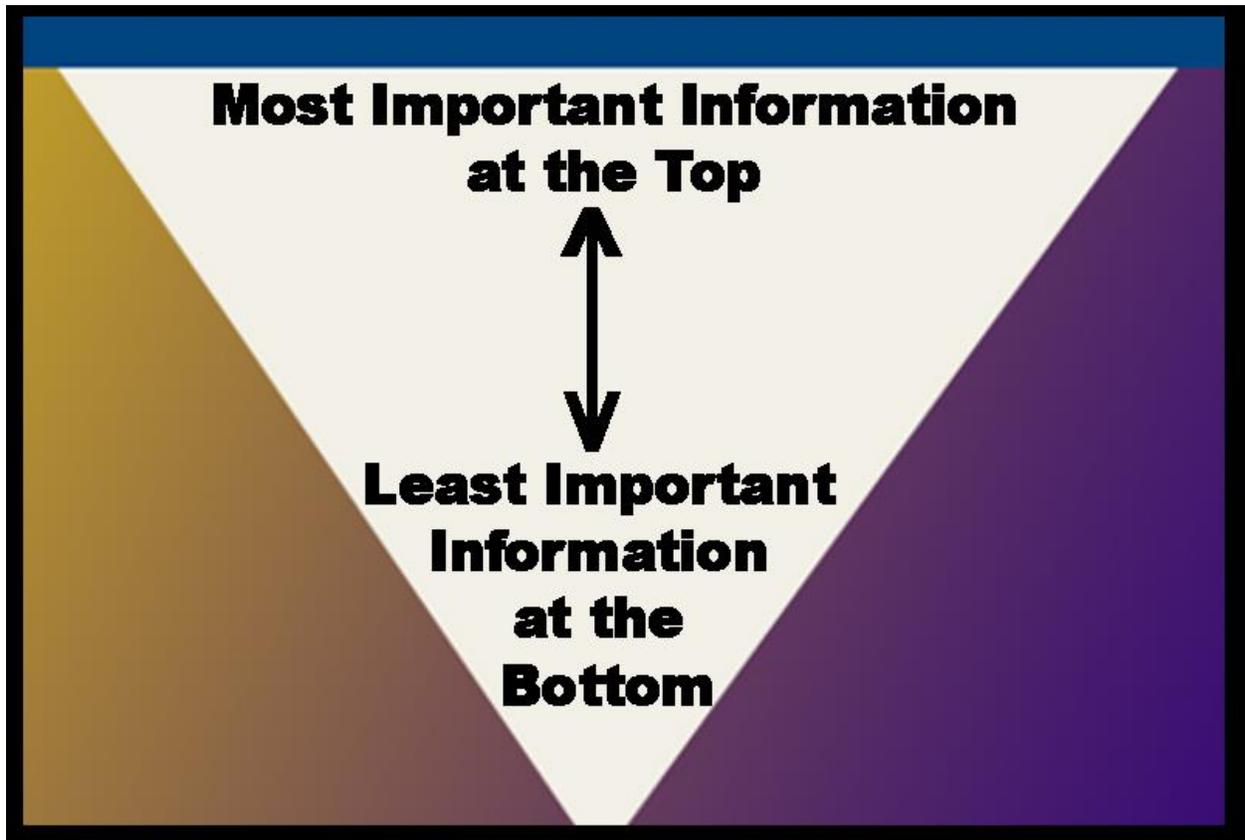
For Photographs or Videos include: URL addresses for download

The Heading

Whether you are communicating digitally on the Internet or delivering printed hardcopy, the most effective method for getting information to the Mainstream as well as the Social Media is the Press Release.

A Press Release should include your organization name and any logo, along with address and contact information.

It's important that the words "Press Release" or "News Release" be prominently displayed at the top of the page. You don't want the recipient to have to read the entire document to figure out what it is or to whom it should be directed. The goal is to get it in front of the right person without delay.



The Inverted Pyramid

Your Press Release should be composed in the “Inverted Pyramid” format, which is sometimes referred to as the “Associated Press Style.” This is the layout the AP has long used in writing news copy for the wire service. The most important information goes at the top with the lesser important information closer to the bottom. An advantage to using this style for your release is that it reads easily, is simple to understand and flows like a news story.

A Powerful Headline

As you begin composing your news release, think of yourself as the headline writer of a newspaper; come up with a headline that will grab the attention of the person reading it. Remember, your headline has to be interesting, because you are competing for valuable news coverage against scores of other individuals, organizations and community events. Your headline is your best shot for capturing the attention of the news assignment editor, producer or staff member assigned to sift through the pile of news releases that crosses his or her desk every day. Your headline should be printed across the top of page, just below your agency's letterhead or contact information.

Think Like a Reporter

As you begin to write the release, think of yourself as a reporter who is writing the actual news story. What value does your information bring to the readers or viewers of news outlet? Are there any possible tie-ins with other bigger news stories or events?

You don't want your release to be too self-serving, that will become blatantly obvious to the editors and they will give you and your story less credibility. You want it to appear as objective as possible.

The first sentence of your release must contain the most important or interesting fact of the story. As you continue writing your release, position

the lesser important information closer to the bottom. That makes your copy easier to comprehend.

Don't use all capital letters in the release, because that makes it more difficult for the copy to be read. Instead, use upper and lower case characters (Times New Roman or Arial, 12 point).

Include descriptive terms. Your release will have more impact if you can help the reader picture it in his or her head.

Use Quotes

Quotes give reporters more options for creating interesting and understandable stories from your press release. The use of quotes in your release will help reinforce your message.

In a news release about the discovery of a new alternative fuel for cars, it would be appropriate to include a powerful quote from your President or CEO. For example: MaxiFuels President John Jones says, *"This discovery will cut fuel costs by more than 50% for every family or business that relies on gasoline."*

If a police agency wanted to send out a release to announce a crackdown on illegal street racing in their community, a quote from their chief would be appropriate, *"We will not tolerate illegal street racing. We will keep the streets of Jackson safe. If you are caught racing, you're going to lose your*

driver's license and go to jail." This lets the reporter know that the Chief is passionate about the subject and will likely be a good interview subject.

Throughout your release, state your information as clearly as possible. Include helpful background information about the subject, event or individuals referenced.

When you finish your release go back over it to make sure you have covered "The Five W's": Who, What, When, Where, Why and How.

Pass the release around in your office and ask different people what they feel is the most the interesting or important fact in the story; see if their thoughts match up with yours.

A typical news release should rarely exceed two pages, however additional information and statistics may accompany the release.

In this rapidly evolving electronic age it is possible to include your own audio and video sound bites as well as other visuals, if you are digitally distributing your news release.

Because of cutbacks in news organizations, there are fewer reporters to cover more stories. You are now an even more important resource for the media. If your news release is well written, some news outlets may run it

verbatim.

If you send the media your release in a digital format, publications can cut and paste various quotes and paragraphs. Even if the outlets don't run your release exactly as you have written it, the digital format will enable them to more easily use the words and quotes that you have provided.

If an outlet reproduces your news release word for word, they will attribute it to you or your company if you have sent it to them as a private individual or company.

If you are a public agency, don't be upset if a newspaper carries your release verbatim, but fails to give you credit for it; consider it a compliment. If a newspaper trusts you enough to print your entire news release, it means you have gained their respect. You may not receive a by line or the recognition of being credited for writing the release, but your public agency will be featured in a publication exactly the way you intended. Eventually, you may suggest to an editor that they give your agency a regular column that you will prepare.

There are a lot of factors that will determine whether your press release generates the results you desire. Saturdays, Sundays and Mondays are usually slow news days, so a news release might generate more coverage if it is geared for that timeframe. As the end of the work week nears reporters and news editors are preparing for their days off, so it is more difficult to catch their attention. That's why many public agencies that are legally required to release certain information will do it on a Friday in what has become known as *the Friday afternoon data dump*.

Today, businesses and organizations are becoming more savvy about coming up with angles and hooks to pitch news stories. How well your release is written will be a big factor in how much news coverage and public interest you are able to generate.

Are You Prepared for Breaking News?



What Do You Do When YOU Are the Story?

This could be the most valuable training experience of your career

On the ground where News is being made



Instructors **Russell Ruffin** and **Penny Carter** - Award Winning TV News Veterans who authored two books on Media Relations, have traveled the country from **Baltimore** to **Ferguson** to **San Bernardino** for some of the nation's major Breaking News events to determine what can be learned to help avoid and manage a news media crisis.

Media Relations & On-Camera Training

Simulated Breaking News Events: From the Routine to the Extreme

LIVE On-Camera Coaching with Free Video of Your Performances

While this is an Advanced class, it is designed so that those with limited experience can benefit by following along in our workbook and proceeding at their own level. Take home our free exclusive Media Relations Guide



LESSONS LEARNED FROM REAL WORLD EVENTS

- Get Ahead of a Crisis Quickly
- Keep the Media Message On Track
- Become More Proactive and Less Reactive
- Handle Ambush Interviews and Investigative Reporters
- Write More Effective News Releases
- Create & Distribute Your Own Sound Bites & Interviews
- Use the Social Media to Your Advantage

For more information contact:
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